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# James Street North

HAMILTON

A HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT PLAN

Prepared by

Nicholas Hill

Architect · Planner

London



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a heritage conservation district plan

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## CONTENTS

SECTION 1	INTRODUCTION	Page 1
	1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PLAN	1
	1.2 THE DISTRICT	2
SECTION 2	ACHIEVING THE PLAN	3
SECTION 3	ASSUMPTIONS	4
SECTION 4	GOALS	6
	4.1 INTRODUCTION	6
	4.2 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT GOALS	6
	4.3 SOCIAL GOALS	7
	4.4 ECONOMIC GOALS	7
SECTION 5	BUILDING	9
	5.1 INTRODUCTION	9
	5.2 OBJECTIVES	10
	5.3 POLICY	11
	5.4 ACTIONS	16
SECTION 6	STREETSCAPE	18
	6.1 INTRODUCTION	18
	6.2 TRANSPORTATION AND CAR PARKING	19
	6.2.1 INTRODUCTION	19
	6.2.2 OBJECTIVES	20
	6.2.3 POLICIES	21
	6.2.4 ACTIONS	21
	6.3 LANDSCAPING AND OPEN SPACE	23
	6.3.1 INTRODUCTION	23
	6.3.2 OBJECTIVES	25
	6.3.3 POLICIES	25
	6.3.4 ACTIONS	26



6.4	LIGHTING	27
6.4.1	INTRODUCTION	27
6.4.2	OBJECTIVES	28
6.4.3	POLICY	28
6.4.4	ACTIONS	28
6.5	SIGNAGE	28
6.5.1	INTRODUCTION	28
6.5.2	OBJECTIVES	29
6.5.3	POLICY	30
6.5.4	ACTIONS	30
SECTION 7	LAND USE	31
7.1	INTRODUCTION	31
7.2	OBJECTIVES	32
7.3	POLICIES	32
7.4	ACTIONS	32
SECTION 8	IMPLEMENTATION	34
8.1	INTRODUCTION	34
8.2	OBJECTIVES	34
8.3	POLICIES	35
8.4	ACTIONS	38
APPENDIX	GUIDELINES ON THE DESIGNATION OF HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICTS	
	REFERENCE LIST OF OTHER STUDIES	

Note:  
These are missing  
from this copy.



## SECTION 1      INTRODUCTION

### 1.1    PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This plan presents an unparalleled opportunity for James Street North in the City of Hamilton. The opportunity basically is to

- .    Conserve a superb historic streetscape
- .    Strengthen a community and its aspirations
- .    Enhance business and investment.

The opportunity and occasion of this plan should not be underestimated or squandered. It presents the first time when the physical, social and economic substance of James Street North has been researched, public meetings held and a plan prepared. The plan is bold and invigorating because James Street North has the capability of being a truly splendid urban place. The basic ingredients are present - a beautiful historic building stock, close proximity to the city centre, a resident community with a strong sense of identity and a long established business presence. Today to the untutored eye this potential may be hard to imagine. Many of the original historic buildings have been covered over, windows have been boarded up, embellishments painted over, signs and wires smother the streetscape and traffic overloads the environment. To the tutored eye however the street has immense unrealized opportunities.

Fundamentally therefore this plan is about realizing opportunities for James Street North. The fact that it is being prepared under the umbrella of a heritage conservation district plan is natural. Historically James Street North has been the centre of commerce, government and institutions in the city as is evidenced today by its substantial and splendid architectural heritage. However heritage planning is not just about buildings even though this is a distinctive feature. It is also about a streetscape of streets, traffic, car parking, landscaping, lighting, signage and pedestrian amenity. It is about a community and its values and identity. It is about business, investment and the local economy. It is about these and many more features that make the particular community of James Street



North, and how they may be fused into an effective whole. Without this effective fusion the result is inevitably weakened. Rehabilitating the upper floors of the building stock for residential use will not be successful if the street is heavily loaded with fast, noisy and polluting traffic. Conserving the appearance of an historic building facade will be defeated if it is covered by hanging signs. Investment in a business premises is lessened if there is insufficient convenient car parking.

The weakness of James Street North has been its lack of a coherent plan and vision. It has become shaped by independent, unrelated and counter-productive actions.

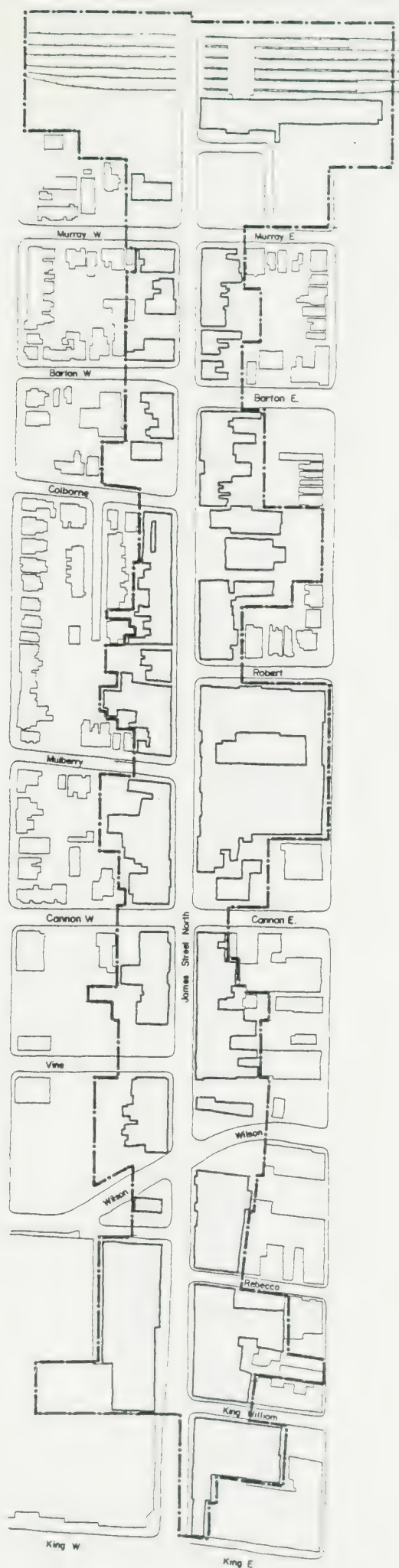
An overall plan is vital. Attractive, successful and prosperous street-scapes do not simply happen. They must be carefully and thoroughly planned and managed. Each and every part must be carefully designed and balanced against the whole. This basically is the intent of this plan. An intent to evolve an attractive, functional and distinctive streetscape that mirrors local character and inspires city pride.

In conclusion, the James Street North Heritage District Plan holds the opportunity for James Street North to become a great part of the City of Hamilton and a healthy contributor to the economy, the tax base, employment and tourism as well as enriching the lives of those who live and work in the area.

## **1.2 THE DISTRICT**

The following text and maps noted as Schedules "A" and "B" shall constitute the Heritage Conservation District Plan for James Street North in the City of Hamilton. The plan focuses on the area shown on Schedule "A".

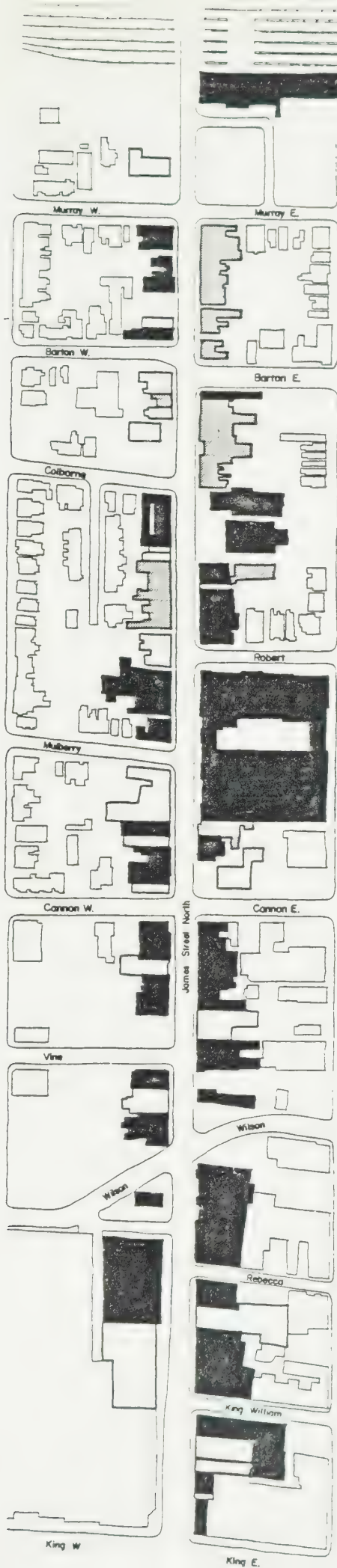







## Schedule "A"

-----  
district boundary





## Schedule "B"

-  building "A"
-  building "B"
-  building "C"



## SECTION 2      ACHIEVING THE PLAN

The purpose of this plan is to analyse the historic James Street North district in the City of Hamilton, undertake a program of public meetings related to the analysis and arrive at a set of policies to ensure the district's long term viability, conservation and enhancement. The resultant plan will be achieved by

- Creating**            a process whereby the future development of the district can be related to the goals and policies of plan.
- Guiding**            future development to ensure that the historic character and human scale of the district are preserved and enhanced.
- Instituting**        a public participation process to ensure that the plan's objectives and policies, both now and in the future, reflect the needs of the community.
- Establishing**       a program for the implementation of the plan's objectives and policies through public and private administration.
- Providing**           a liaison between provincial and municipal programs and the individual property owners in the district.
- Appointing**        a James Street North Plan Committee to administer and promote the plan.
- Establishing**       the base for a revision to the official plan and restricted area (zoning) by-law for the City of Hamilton as it pertains to James Street North.



### SECTION 3      ASSUMPTIONS

This plan is based on assumptions and information developed and derived from two main sources. The first source is from the planning studies, research and steering committee meetings carried out and which are contained in the appendices. The second source is from the official plan for the City of Hamilton. From these sources a set of basic assumptions have been formulated upon which this heritage conservation district plan has evolved.

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Physical<br/>Environment</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That James Street North is a district of significant architectural and historical value worthy of preservation and enhancement under the Ontario Heritage Act.</li> <li>2. That James Street North has an historic building stock that should be conserved and maintained.</li> <li>3. That new development on James Street North should complement and strengthen the historic character of the area.</li> <li>4. That the supporting physical infra-structure including transportation, streets, car parking, landscaping and pedestrian amenity should be designed to support and strengthen the historic and human environment of the district.</li> </ol> |
| <b>Social<br/>Environment</b>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. That there is a desire by the City and the local community to preserve James Street North as an historic district of special value and local identity.</li> <li>6. That James Street North represents a "village in the city" quality to the local community that desires to protect and preserve its strong sense of local identity and place.</li> <li>7. That James Street North should develop and strengthen as a place to live in as well as a place to work and shop.</li> <li>8. That the James Street North community desires to work together to achieve common goals.</li> </ol>  |



**Economic  
Environment**

9. That James Street North represents a viable business district and increasing efforts should be made to improve and strengthen its economic base.
10. That the conservation and enhancement of the special historic qualities and local sense of identity of James Street North will be the basis for economic renewal and prosperity.





Mid Victorian commercial building stock of simple yet fine proportions. The centre portion shows a proposed infill of compatible design where a two storey building presently sits.



## SECTION 4 GOALS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The heritage conservation district plan is part of a continuum of plans and decisions administered through the public and private sector for the City of Hamilton. It should not therefore be considered as an isolated document but rather a refinement of thinking for one particular area - James Street North. The plan by way of research and public input has crystalized in more detail the physical, social and economic objectives for the area and which are as follows

### 4.2 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT GOALS

A primary objective of this plan is to conserve and maintain a humanistic quality to James Street North. This will be largely accomplished through the conservation of the historic building stock and complimentary design of the supporting infra-structure including traffic patterns, car parking, landscaping and pedestrian amenity. To be effective all elements must be orchestrated in concert to achieve an environment that is at once functional and attractive. The physical environment objectives therefore are

- . to achieve a cohesive well designed district that emphasizes the human scale and historic character of the streetscape
- . to encourage the preservation and enhancement of the historic building stock
- . to guide the construction of new buildings to be of good design compatible with the historic district
- . to ensure that the supporting infra-structure including traffic pattern and car parking compliments the human scale, historic character and businesses in the district
- . to introduce positive features that will enhance the atmosphere and visual appeal of the streetscape including landscaping, street lights, signage and pedestrian amenity



- . to promote heritage conservation as a natural consideration in the development of the district.

#### 4.3 SOCIAL GOALS

James Street North is a distinctive and proud community with a strong sense of identity and place. Described as a "village in the city", the steering committee meetings held to guide this plan, voiced a keen desire to protect the village-like atmosphere of the district that fosters a sense of belonging and personal contact in business and socializing. There was a concern that planning initiatives not supplant or weaken these attributes. The social objectives of this plan are as follows

- . to preserve and strengthen the "village in the city" character of James Street North
- . to protect and enhance community pride and identity in the district
- . to involve the local community in major issues affecting the district
- . to develop James Street North as a place to live in as well as a place to shop and work in
- . to foster a community recognition of the historic and architectural significance of the district and its origins.

#### 4.4 ECONOMIC GOALS

While a primary objective of this plan is to conserve and enhance the historic building stock and character of James Street North it is not the intention to create a museum-like atmosphere. On the contrary it is vital that the district remain a competitive and progressive part of the city's business environment. This plan however is seen as an unparalleled opportunity to enhance James Street North as a visibly special and attractive district. Such an opportunity for economic rejuvenation would include a full and profitable use of the building stock, increased shopping traffic and business, an attractive and pleasurable work environment and a more



compatible infra-structure of traffic flow, car parking and amenity. The heritage conservation district plan for James Street North would become the guiding document for economic rejuvenation. The specific economic objectives are as follows

- . to maintain and enhance James Street North as a progressive and profitable commercial district in the city
- . to develop improvement programs that will promote investment in the district
- . to promote the historic character of James Street North as a basis for increased economic rejuvenation
- . to use the building stock in a fuller and more profitable manner for business and residences
- . to provide incentives and assistance to the individual property owners to utilize sound and beneficial preservation procedures in their improvement plans.



## SECTION 5      BUILDING

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

James Street North is a street of superb historic building, which collectively makes up an historic streetscape of unparalleled quality. Even more remarkable is the sheer quantity and variety of historic building that still stands and in a sound state of repair. To the untrained eye the building stock today may appear irretrievably run down and shabby but beneath the peeling paint, covered up facades and boarded over windows is a building fabric of beautiful proportions, style and detail. By accident probably more so than by design James Street North has survived and with it a rich architectural fabric. History has witnessed James Street North as once the centre of government, institutional and commercial activity in the city and this is evidenced by the great diversity of building type and style that remains today. Above all it is this building heritage that provides the character and special sense of place about James Street North and which is the basis of this plan. To preserve this character and special sense of place is to preserve the building stock. By building stock it is meant not just history, but the attractive and humanistic scale older building provides. The craftsmanship, the details, the fine proportions and design, the good and sound use of materials, the integrity of the construction, the mixed use of the buildings, the enduring quality of age and the sense of continuity and permanence are but a few qualities the building stock of James Street North provides as a special place. It is these important, but sometimes elusive qualities, that have given birth to the desire now to conserve the street as an heritage conservation district.

To suggest that James Street North has always been recognized as an historic district worthy of preservation is amiss. Over the past twenty-five years the historic fabric was gradually ignored and forgotten, and in many cases covered over. Today the potential of the streetscape is being reawakened and with it a desire to conserve and restore the building stock.





A finely detailed classical building of the mid 1800's,  
with Georgian proportions.



The policies contained in this sub-section are some of the most important in the plan. They may be simply stated but will be difficult to achieve. Basically the policies are two-fold. Firstly, to conserve, maintain and enhance the historic building stock. Secondly, to guide the design of new building so that it complements the historic district. The intent is to achieve an attractive coherent historic streetscape that reads as a whole rather than, at present, a disparate and conflicting set of parts. The intent will require commitment, support and discipline by property owners to work within a set of guidelines. Individual preferences may be modified but the overall result will be stronger and more inviting.

In discussing conservation, it is meant to repair, maintain and enhance the existing historic, architectural features and further to rebuild missing or deteriorated features that belong to the original building appearance. By building it is meant mainly the exterior visible facade fronting James Street North, the side streets and interior open spaces.

In discussing a facade, it is meant primarily the upper visible building face being at the second storey and up.

By historic architectural features, it is meant those main historic building elements, both existing and original, that comprise a building facade. This would include the fabric and design of walls, windows, sills, labels, keystones, medallions, cornices, brackets, piers, lintels, bays, arches, roofs, dormers, doorways and chimneys.

## 5.2 OBJECTIVES

The following objectives are to be followed with regard to the conservation alteration and new building in the district

- . To conserve buildings designated 'A' buildings as noted on Schedule "B". These buildings are of major importance to the district. They have architectural and historical value. They



contribute to the visual integrity of the district streetscape. They support and define the character of the district. They may possess interesting or unusual architectural features. They may be examples of building types which gauge the street's physical development.

- . To conserve and complementarily alter buildings designated as 'B' buildings as noted on Schedule "B". These buildings are primarily of contextual value to the district. While not necessarily of outstanding architectural or historical value, they contribute to the visual integrity of the district streetscape. They support and define the character of the district.
- . To complementarily alter and build anew buildings designated as 'C' buildings on Schedule "B". These buildings are both new and old and are unrelated to the historic character of the street. While of merit in their own right, they are buildings that do not reinforce the historic and architectural integrity of the streetscape as a whole.

### 5.3 POLICY

#### . 'A' BUILDINGS

The historic and/or architectural qualities of the 'A' building stock on James Street North are considered a valuable and integral part of the heritage conservation district. Indeed this building stock is the foundation of the district plan, and is of value in its own right and as it contributes to the streetscape composition as a whole. Accordingly the policy of this plan is to encourage the conservation of the 'A' building stock in accordance with the following criteria

**Height**            height of building shall be similar to surrounding buildings.



<b>Proportion</b>	proportions of alterations to buildings shall complement the proportions of the surrounding buildings.
<b>Roof</b>	the roof pattern shall be similar to or complementary to the established roof pattern of the street.
<b>Windows</b>	the placement and proportion of height to width of windows should complement those of surrounding buildings.
<b>Colours</b>	colours used through paint and materials should be historically accurate colours being of quiet subtle natural shades.
<b>Materials</b>	materials appropriate and typical of the heritage district should be used with an emphasis on natural fabric such as brick, stone and wood as opposed to metals and plastics.
<b>Set back</b>	set back of new buildings should be similar to that of the existing building stock so as to maintain an integrity of building edge.
<b>Store fronts</b>	original store front fabric shall be conserved where possible and new store fronts shall be complementary to the scale and proportions of the building facade. A liberal design approach is encouraged to foster individuality of the type of business and the proprietor's taste.
<b>Demolition</b>	there will be a strong presumption against demolition and exceptional measures will be taken to save buildings where necessary.

## . 'B' BUILDINGS

The 'B' building stock is an integral and valuable part of the heritage conservation district mainly for its contribution to the



streetscape composition as a whole. This building stock is of contextural value rather than outstanding architectural and/or historical value. The policy of this plan is to encourage their conservation. If alterations are undertaken however, it is encouraged that they be undertaken in a complementary manner to maintain the integrity of the streetscape in accordance with the following criteria

<b>Height</b>	height of building shall be similar to surrounding buildings.
<b>Proportion</b>	proportions of alterations to buildings shall complement the proportions of the surrounding buildings.
<b>Roof</b>	the roof pattern shall be similar to or complementary to the established roof pattern of the street.
<b>Windows</b>	the placement and proportion of height to width of windows should complement those of surrounding buildings.
<b>Colours</b>	colours used through paint and materials should be historically accurate colours being of quiet subtle natural shades.
<b>Materials</b>	materials appropriate and typical of the heritage district should be used with an emphasis on natural fabric such as brick, stone and wood as opposed to metals and plastics.
<b>Set back</b>	set back of new buildings should be similar to that of the existing building stock so as to maintain an integrity of building edge.
<b>Store fronts</b>	original store front fabric shall be conserved where possible and new store fronts shall be complementary to the scale and proportions of the building facade. A liberal design approach is encouraged to foster individuality of the type of business and the proprietor's taste.





An interesting mix of early and late Victorian commercial buildings blended together by their similar height and scale.



**Demolition** while there will be a general presumption against the demolition of 'B' buildings, the proposed replacement building will be a major consideration in determining the degree of encouragement given to retention.

## . 'C' BUILDINGS

The 'C' building stock consists of both new and old buildings that are unrelated to the historic character of the street. It is not the intent or desire of this plan to be disrespectful to this building stock but rather encourage over time complementary alteration to better integrate the building stock into the streetscape as a whole. The strength of a heritage conservation district is its overall historic and architectural integrity as a streetscape of special character and quality. Accordingly the policies for the 'C' buildings is that complementary alterations shall be encouraged in accordance with the following criteria

<b>Height</b>	height of building shall be similar to surrounding buildings.
<b>Proportion</b>	proportions of alterations to buildings shall complement the proportions of the surrounding buildings.
<b>Roof</b>	the roof pattern shall be similar to or complementary to the established roof pattern of the street.
<b>Windows</b>	the placement and proportion of height to width of windows should complement those of surrounding buildings.
<b>Colours</b>	colours used through paint and materials should be historically accurate colours being of quiet subtle natural shades.
<b>Materials</b>	materials appropriate and typical of the heritage district should be used with an emphasis on natural fabric such as brick, stone and wood as opposed to metals and plastics.



- Set back** set back of new buildings should be similar to that of the existing building stock so as to maintain an integrity of building edge.
- Store fronts** original store front fabric shall be conserved where possible and new store fronts shall be complementary to the scale and proportions of the building facade. A liberal design approach is encouraged to foster individuality of the type of business and the proprietor's taste.
- Demolition** where there are few or no complementary architectural or historic features there will not be a presumption against demolition or building face lift. Where the building detracts from the overall streetscape composition additional building will be encouraged to better reflect the tone of the historic district.

## . NEW BUILDINGS

New building is encouraged on existing vacant sites or where buildings have been destroyed or demolished. New buildings should be looked upon as an opportunity to embellish the streetscape composition. It is not the intent or desire that new building should reproduce past building styles but rather that it should be of good contemporary design and complementary to the height, proportion, scale and character of the district. In this regard the following criteria should be adhered to

- Height** the height of new buildings at the street face shall be similar to surrounding buildings. However the building may be higher if the additional storeys are stepped or set back so as to preserve the general street facade height. Single storey buildings will not be permitted where they weaken the continuity of the Visual streetscape composition.



<b>Proportion</b>	proportions of alterations to buildings shall complement the proportions of the surrounding buildings.
<b>Roof</b>	the roof pattern shall be similar to or complementary to the established roof pattern of the street.
<b>Windows</b>	the placement and proportion of height to width of windows should complement those of surrounding buildings.
<b>Colours</b>	colours used through paint and materials should be historically accurate colours being of quiet subtle natural shades.
<b>Materials</b>	materials appropriate and typical of the heritage district should be used with an emphasis on natural fabric such as brick, stone and wood as opposed to metals and plastics.
<b>Set back</b>	set back of new buildings should be similar to that of the existing building stock so as to maintain an integrity of building edge.
<b>Store fronts</b>	new store fronts shall be complementary to the scale and proportions of the street facades. A liberal design approach is encouraged to foster individuality of the type of business and the proprietor's taste.

#### 5.4 ACTIONS

- . A Heritage Conservation District shall be established under the Ontario Heritage Act for the study area and as outlined in guidelines in the appendices.
- . Development permits will be issued by Council in accordance with the policies.



- . Where policies cannot be implemented through the Ontario Heritage Act, Council will take actions to encourage owners to follow the policies.
- . Architectural design guidelines will be drawn up to illustrate and promote the objectives for new buildings.
- . A committee will be set up to advise Council on achieving these policies, see Section 8.





A large three storey late Victorian terrace of very fine proportions, scale and detail.



## SECTION 6      STREETScape

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The conservation and enhancement of James Street North includes, not only buildings, but a rich and complex association of open spaces, sidewalks, landscaping, lighting, traffic, car parking and signage. If they are badly planned or neglected the environment deteriorates. Conversely if the street is carefully planned and managed, an attractive and prosperous result evolves. It is most important also to enhance the character of James Street North which gives it a special and inviting individuality. The key to a successful streetscape is when its many disparate parts come together as a coherent whole. Without this coherence much activity and investment can be counter-productive. Rehabilitating the upper floors of the building stock for residential use will not be successful if the street is heavily loaded with fast, noisy and polluting traffic. Conserving an historic building facade will be defeated in appearance if those facades are covered with hanging signs that obscure their proportions and craftsmanship.

At present James Street North has no clearly defined streetscape vision or plan. What James Street North is today is more a result of historical accident than pre-design. Its character has been, and continues to be, shaped by a series of independent unrelated activities than a clear coherent goal. Many activities such as traffic and lights have been shaped from a city-wide perspective. Some effective landscaping has been carried out including sidewalk treescape, but this is, to a large extent overwhelmed by the profusion of wires and signs. Car parks have been located and a large amount more is required, but what effect will this have on the integrity and attractiveness of the streetscape as a whole?

An overall plan is vital. Attractive, successful and prosperous streetscapes do not simply happen. Each and every part must be designed and carefully balanced against the whole. This is not to imply that individual



creativity and spontaneity will not be required and occur. It is required and will occur. An attractive, functional, and distinctive streetscape that mirrors local character and pride inspires individuality and pride, and will draw people from the city and the region and enhance its economy.

In a broader context James Street North is envisioned as a major link between the city centre and the waterfront to the north. Emerging city planning and developments are realizing the rejuvenation of both the city centre and the waterfronts with James street North as the link. Accordingly a high quality of urban environment is deemed critical to achieve this objective.

## 6.2 TRANSPORTATION AND CAR PARKING

### 6.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Car parking and traffic dominated the Advisory Committee meetings held to formulate this plan. Concern, frustration and despair were voiced repeatedly over the malaise of car parking and traffic flow on James Street North. Comments were overwhelmingly critical of the present situation.

The lack of convenient car parking; the ruinous impact that no parking between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. has on business; the lack of visible and convenient access to parking lots; the lack of good signage to parking lots; the high car parking fees; the overuse of metered parking; the high incidence of illegal parking; the lack of parking that deters shoppers and residents from coming to James Street North; the excessive and fast moving traffic; the excessive noise and pollution; the detrimental effect of one way traffic; the deterrent one way traffic has to drawing people from the city centre up to James Street North; the bad repair of the streets; the sheer overwhelming amount of traffic were just a few of the numerous concerns the public had with traffic and car parking on James Street North.



James Street North is a one way southbound street for almost all its length. Three major streets intersecting James Street are also one way. Overall the street consists of four lanes. However at the southern end it widens to five lanes. The street has an arterial designation by the City Traffic Department, which means it is to accommodate relatively long distance movements within and through the city. Car parking is limited and subservient to the prime purpose of an arterial road which is to move traffic.

• The conflict is an important one. Most certainly at present the one way arterial road status of James Street North does not complement the objectives of this plan. If it did the traffic status would not be performing well. The fact that the traffic does flow heavily, efficiently and with speed with a minimum of interference by car parking and pedestrian amenity indicates the severity of the problem for the local community and this plan. Some measures can be taken in the short term but long term solutions require traffic studies. However during the steering committee and public meetings the City Traffic Department were responsive to a special study being undertaken to help resolve the evident conflicts. Accordingly, the plan recommends that a special traffic and car parking study be undertaken to address and resolve the concerns of the local community and the objectives of this plan.

#### 6.2.2 OBJECTIVES

- to organize the traffic pattern on James Street North to support a vibrant commercial district with a pedestrian orientation.
- to initiate ways of reducing the environmental impact of the current traffic situation.
- to initiate a special study of traffic and car parking on James Street North with particular emphasis on the needs of the community.



### 6.2.3 POLICIES

- . Continuous on-street metered car parking should be provided on James Street North to enhance the business status of the area.
- . Additional off-street parking should be provided at the rear of the commercial blocks with well signed access for vehicles and pedestrians.
- . Through traffic volume and speed should be reduced to enhance the pedestrian, resident and shopper comfort conditions.
- . Additional cross walks should be installed to enhance pedestrian status in the area.
- . The re-instatement of two-way traffic flow should be examined on James Street North to facilitate and enhance communication between the city centre and the street and as a major link to the waterfront.
- . Overhead bridges for Go Transit or to connect to the +15 system should be avoided if possible but if necessary should be well designed and complementary of the streetscape.

### 6.2.4 ACTIONS

- . The City will remove the 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. no waiting restrictions.
- . The City will study street parking and create as many on street parking metered spaces as possible.
- . The City will examine ways to create as much off street parking as possible at the rear of properties and dispersed along the street.
- . The City will purchase and make attractive as possible the link from the Mulberry Street car park to James Street.
- . Traffic will be slowed by additional on street parking, streetscape features such as pedestrian crosswalks, and longer pedestrian crossing times.





The Tivoli illustrates High Victorian design at its best with a profusion of elaborate details and materials. A new facade with windows is shown for the Dominion store to the left.



- . Any traffic changes will take account of the special nature of James Street North.
- . There will be no direct access from the proposed perimeter road south of James Street North.
- . The City will study points for additional pedestrian crosswalks.
- . A traffic study, part of a larger study for the downtown, will look at the impact of introducing two way traffic for James Street North and make recommendations in light of the study.
- . Overhead bridges will be designed simply, to minimize visual intrusion and to be as inviting as possible for a pedestrian walking along the street. Plans will be reviewed by the James Street North Planning Committee.
- . The City will request the Region to provide bus service in keeping with the objectives of the plan.



## 6.3 LANDSCAPING AND OPEN SPACE

### 6.3.1 INTRODUCTION

During the height of its prosperity in the late nineteenth century James Street North had little to no landscaping. It was a street of grand buildings. Today there is a keen interest in landscaping city streets and this sentiment was evident in the public meetings held to formulate this plan. In the recent past trees have been planted up James Street North on the outer side of the sidewalk. The desire for landscaping occurs for different reasons, not only for the intrinsic beauty of trees and flowers. Often the desire is to create some foil to a hard edged urban environment of buildings, sidewalks, streets, signs, wires and traffic. Landscaping provides a pleasing softness, texture, colour and beauty in an otherwise rather hostile visual environment. The desire for landscaping on James Street North is partly for these reasons. Landscaping provides a humanistic quality to the streetscape that is a primary objective of the plan. The beautiful small park in front of Christ's Church Cathedral is an excellent example in this regard.

Besides the pleasant environmental qualities landscaping provides there is the visual ability trees have of infilling and buffering empty spaces, car parks and traffic-laden streets. There are instances on James Street North where buildings have been removed creating a visual gap in the streetscape. Not only is the spatial continuity of the streetscape damaged but unsightly views of the back of blocks, service areas and car parks opened up. The effectiveness and attractiveness of the street suffers badly. Tree buffering and landscaping can partly compensate for these occurrences.

Other smaller landscape opportunities such as parkettes and planters have been treated with caution. The street has a strong visual presence with a very urban scale. Parkettes and planters are essentially domestic in character and scale and deemed inappropriate for James Street North.



The major open space in James Street North is the sidewalk. This is where the community walks, meets, talks, window shops and displays merchandise for sale. It is not only a place for movement, it is a place for socializing and recreation. Because of the nature of the community the street is a vibrant and alive place. Consideration of a separate designated park is largely irrelevant in this regard. Open space is present and working. During the public meetings and in the research, no popular opinion was raised over the need or desire to widen the sidewalks. The comparatively narrow width of the sidewalks promotes a certain congestion that is part of the village-like atmosphere of the street.

Three distinct and separate open spaces, in a more traditional manner, in the James Street North district are in front of Christ's Church Cathedral, the C.N. Railway Station and at the northeast corner of James and Wilson. The Christ's Church Cathedral forecourt park is a mature, established and beautiful small park that contributes immensely to the attractiveness of the street. The park is made possible by the set back of the Cathedral from the street line and is the only instance where this occurs on the street.

The large open space in front of the C.N. station is a space with much potential both aesthetically and functionally. Aesthetically, it provides a visual frame to the neo-classical designed station building, which could be enhanced further. Functionally it provides an excellent opportunity for an active outdoor recreational space. Its location in the midst of a residential area promises good use. This plan proposes therefore that opportunities for the use and enhancement of the open space be explored with C.N.

The small park at the northeast corner of Wilson and James has been modestly developed with trees and flower borders and it is proposed that further improvements be made. Its pleasantness for sitting is diminished by the heavy traffic on Wilson and proposed elevated railway line also on Wilson.



Opportunity for a special landscape treatment is considered appropriate in front of the armoury. The armoury is a large and massive scaled building that tends to deter pedestrian presence and comfort on the east side of James Street North. Landscaping, it is considered, would soften the environment and make it more attractive and comfortable for pedestrians. Secondly, landscaping at this point would create a visual break in the unrelieved lineality of the street.

In summary the basic landscaping features proposed to complement the plan's objectives is to maintain and enhance a boulevard of trees down James Street North, to initiate landscape buffering in front of car parks, open spaces and traffic filled streets in the district and to develop an active park in front of the C.N. station.

#### 6.3.2 OBJECTIVES

- . to provide an overall landscape theme to complement the identity of James Street North
- . to accentuate open spaces and enclosures through landscaping
- . to screen and soften visually discordant features such as car parks
- . to use landscaping to highlight and complement the historic building stock.

#### 6.3.3 POLICIES

- . The boulevard of trees on each side of James Street North should be maintained, enhanced and continued to completion to the end of the street. The tree species should not overly obscure the building facade.
- . Where the spatial continuity of the streetscape is punctured by car parks, open spaces, new building set backs and traffic filled streets, landscaping should be initiated to infill the space, buffer the views and re-establish enclosure to the street. Instances where this should be initiated include





Vernacular building stock in the north of the district.  
Simpler proportioned and finely crafted.



- . N.E. corner of Wilson and James Street North
  - . N.W. corner of Vine and James Street North
  - . N.W. corner of Colborne and James Street North
  - . N.E. corner of Cannon and James street North.
- . Provide open space in front of the C.N. railway station both as an appropriate landscaped setting for the neo-classical station building as well as an active recreational park.
  - . A special landscape composition should be developed fronting the armoury to enhance pedestrian comfort and relieve the lineality of James Street North and other notable buildings such as the Tivoli Theatre.
  - . Streetscaping should be simple in nature and design and have a uniform theme building on the streetscaping works currently planned for the south part of James Street North. Subtle changes may be introduced to create added interest and vitality.

#### 6.3.4 ACTIONS

- . A streetscaping scheme will be drawn up based on the objectives and policies of the plan. It will be prioritised and budgeted along with other landscape proposals in the downtown.
- . The C.N. Railway will be approached with the view to purchasing the land in front of the station for a park.



## 6.4 LIGHTING

### 6.4.1 INTRODUCTION

Lighting has two main purposes - functionally to provide illumination for activity and aesthetically to highlight some particular aspect of the environment. The main form of lighting on James Street North is functional highway style lights. The design of the standard and illumination is utilitarian. Other lighting in the district is from illuminated signs and store fronts.

Lighting is a most important feature in the urban environment and has a significant influence on the character of a streetscape. Street lighting can create a warm, pedestrian quality with a human scale or it can create a harsh bright quality with a vehicular scale. At present James Street North leans to the latter quality. High lighting is near absent in the district and many of the superb historic building features are unlit and not seen at night. The opportunities and requirement for a more complementary and creative use of lighting in James Street North are present.

To compliment the objectives of the plan street lighting must serve a dual purpose for traffic and people. The lighting must be adequate for night traffic yet also provide a softer and more attractive source for pedestrians. As an historic area also, the light standards must be suitably scaled, sized and designed to complement the character of the streetscape. An objective of this plan is to initiate therefore a more compatible lighting vocabulary in the district, either of contemporary or modern design.

Floor lighting of architectural features in the district is a desirable and attractive feature that enhances the historic character. There are many buildings, towers, and ornaments worthy of highlighting that would provide a particular and exciting visual composition.



#### 6.4.2 OBJECTIVES

- . to replace the existing street lighting with new lighting that complements the historic character and human scale of the district and the objectives of the plan
- . to enhance building facades, towers and architectural embellishment by illumination.

#### 6.4.3 POLICY

- . The present highway style street lights shall be replaced by light standards and illumination that complement the historic character and human scale of the district and enhance its pedestrian quality.
- . Architectural features in the streetscape shall be illuminated including the following
  - . Christ's Church Cathedral
  - . The Armouries
  - . The C.N. railway station
  - . The Tivoli Theatre tower.

#### 6.4.4 ACTIONS

- . New lighting will be incorporated into the streetscape scheme.

### 6.5 SIGNAGE

#### 6.5.1 INTRODUCTION

Signs are a visually potent element in a streetscape and especially in a historic district. As long as there have been businesses there have been signs. Early photographs of James Street North reveal that signs were as many then as they are now. The main differences are in the construction,



style and location of the signs. In the past signs were largely hand painted to the front face. End walls of buildings also often had signs painted on. Today the variety of signs is far larger in size, style, construction, appearance and location. Signs over store fronts have been partially eclipsed metal or plastic hanging signs that command more attention. In many cases signs are up and in front of the upper building storeys and the integrity of the historic building facade is lost. The overall visual result of signs on James Street North is cluttered and discordant. Many signs are simply unattractive, nondescript and lack simple good design. Only a very few are excellent. Taken individually many signs communicate well but collectively their impact on the streetscape is non-supportive.

Part of the success of this plan will be to synthesize the many different elements that make up a streetscape into a cohesive, attractive and workable whole. One such element is signage, which it is essential should compliment the historic character of James Street North and more particularly the superb upper building facades. It is proposed accordingly that signage should be contained to near the height of the store front. Hanging signs that extend up the face of the building facades should be discontinued. This should not imply disfavour of hanging signs. On the contrary they are an essential part of a business environment that adds spontaneity and vitality to the streetscape. The intent is to enhance the broader visual composition of James Street North and by doing so reveal in an unencumbered way the upper historic building facades.

#### 6.5.2 OBJECTIVES

- . to provide signs that are complementary to the historic streetscape
- . to provide signs that are functional and easily read by the pedestrian and motorist





A late Victorian three and one half storey commercial building of classical proportions and details but with an ornate Mansard roof and dormer windows.



- . to encourage and guide the preservation, or rebuilding where missing, of entablatures over store fronts.

#### 6.5.3 POLICY

- . Signs shall be of a high quality and complementary to the historic character of the district.
- . Hanging signs shall be located at or near the height of the ground floor store fronts and not in front of the facades of the upper storeys.
- . Entablatures over store fronts shall be preserved or rebuilt where missing.
- . Where there is historic precedence some signs may be permitted on the facade above the first floor but the majority of signs will be at or near first floor.
- . Signs not conforming with these policies will be removed over time, where possible.

#### 6.5.4 ACTIONS

- . New signs will be reviewed as part of the approval process.
- . Owners of existing signs which do not conform to the policies of this plan will be approached with a view to removal and replacement.



## SECTION 7      LAND USE

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The southern portions of James Street North was Hamilton's original civic centre. Both the original two city halls and the market hall were on James Street North as was the original post office. The only remaining civic building today is the Federal Building which is no longer in civic use. The new Lloyd D Jackson Square redevelopment dispersed civic uses to other parts of the city and retail use has been introduced. The character of the whole of James Street North is now principally commercial and residential with a modern mall at the south end with downtown uses, gradually trailing off in intensity to the northern end. Small individual premises characterize the middle and northern parts of the district and there are many premises catering to ethnic minorities. Commerce is continued across the railway in the north end neighbourhood. The spaces above the main floors are used for storage and living accommodation although many premises are underused or not used at all. There are neighbourhood areas to either side of James Street North except in the south part of the street. The neighbourhood areas are two or three storey houses although Roberts Village, a high rise development is the exception. Many of the properties are immaculately kept and there is a visible interest in upgrading. These neighbourhood areas are convenient for downtown and the services of James Street North and are well served with churches, schools, and for the most part, parks. To reinforce the commercial and residential nature of the street requires continued commitment and action. The area already has a captive market in the apartments above the stores and surrounding neighbourhoods. As well the area serves as a specialty area drawing in people from a wide area of the city. The large numbers of people in the downtown are drawn only part way up James Street North but improvements to the streetscape and the creation of a historical and architectural identities will help increase this accessibility.



## 7.2 OBJECTIVES

- . to reinforce the commercial nature of James Street North
- . to strengthen the residential component of James Street North and surrounding area.

## 7.3 POLICIES

- . James Street North will be revitalized by building on its existing strengths particularly the high quality of history and architecture.
- . James Street North will operate as a commercial entity within the context of the downtown and a strong identity will be established for it.
- . Continuous commercial frontage onto James Street North will be established as much as possible.
- . Commercial nodes or sub areas will be established to draw people up James Street North specifically in the armories area and the C.N. station area.
- . Encourage the intensification of commercial use particularly within existing structures.
- . Make full utilization of upper floors and rear premises for residential purposes.
- . Encourage high densities which complement the neighbourhood and residential infilling in the adjoining neighbourhood areas.

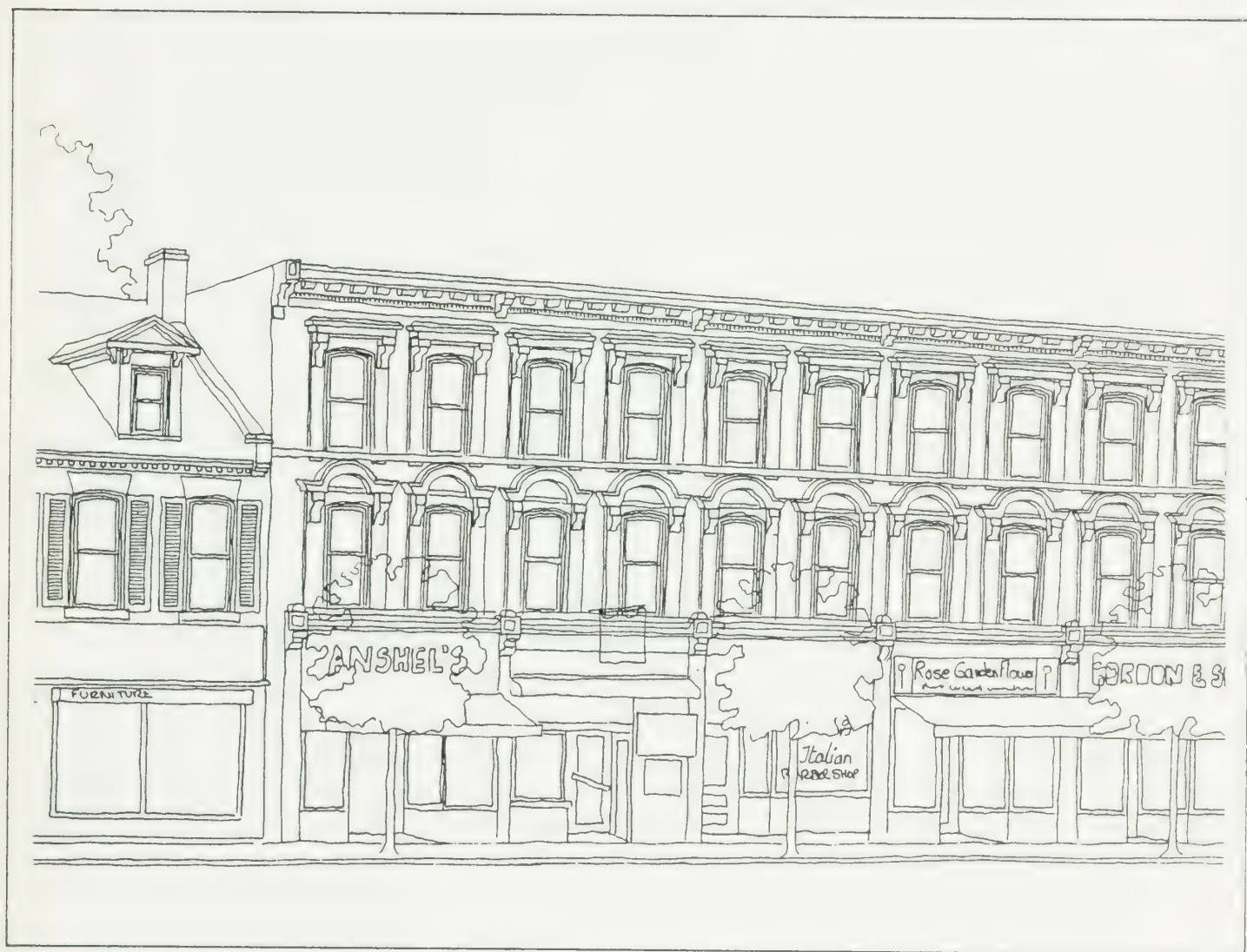
## 7.4 ACTIONS

- . Form a Business Improvement Area to promote the street as a whole. Initiative from the local merchants is considered a key to the success of the plan.



- . Obtain professional advice from consultants and use programs such as Main Street (Heritage Canada).
- . Establish the feasibility of converting part of the armories property and C.N. property as commercial nodes combined with other uses.
- . Establish where commercial and residential infill and intensification might take place.





An excellent example of late High Victorian commercial building characterized by a profusion of elaborate detail.



## SECTION 8      IMPLEMENTATION

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

Implementation of this plan is deemed crucial to the long term well-being of the James Street North heritage conservation district. Implementation is one of the most important parts of the plan. It can however also be one of the weakest. Too often public meetings are held, plans are prepared and passed but little finally happens thereafter. They become ends in themselves. A prime reason often for a plan not realizing its stated objectives is a lack of effective and practical implementation steps. How does the plan get off the ground? What are the procedures for a building permit? What financial incentives are available? Who directs and promotes the plan?

These concerns are particularly important in the case of an heritage conservation district plan. Unlike a more traditional land use plan that is primarily control orientated, an heritage plan depends on visible action. Such action might include the repair and preservation of a building facade; the rebuilding of dormer windows and fascias; new streetscape landscaping and lighting; co-ordination of signage; rehabilitation of empty upper floors, etc.... The plan is a point of reference and orientation for public and private initiatives. Above all it is an unparalleled opportunity for the district to develop in a manner that will enhance the streetscape, preserve a strong sense of local community and identity and promote business prosperity.

It is not enough therefore to simply prepare and approve a plan. It must be promoted and guided. It must inspire confidence, pride and vision. It must ultimately be a goal the community desires to achieve.

### 8.2 OBJECTIVES

The following main objectives are to be achieved to establish effective implementation of the plan



- . to provide effective guidance of the plan to ensure that future development of the district is related to the goals and policies of the plan
- . to establish clear and understandable procedures for building permits in accordance with the Ontario Heritage Act
- . to institute a public participation process to ensure that the plan's objectives and policies, both now and in the future, are achieved
- . to provide effective liaison between provincial and municipal programs and individual property owners in the district to achieve the plan's objectives and policies
- . to appoint a James Street North Planning Committee and Consultant to guide and administer the plan
- . to involve the expertise of L.A.C.A.C. in the implementation of the goals and policies of the plan.

### 8.3 POLICIES

#### . James Street North Planning Committee

A James Street North Planning Committee shall be appointed to guide and promote the heritage conservation district plan. This committee shall be small and workable but also representative of the diverse interests of the district and its community. The committee shall have representation from the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee, city council, city hall staff and the local business and resident community. The committee will report to the Planning and Development Committee. Its main responsibilities will be to

- . promote the plan
- . co-ordinate public and private activity in accordance with the plan's objectives and policies



- . liaison with municipal and provincial authorities on matters pertaining to the district
- . advise on and encourage building conservation and enhancement in the district
- . advise city council on all building changes and improvements in the district in accordance with the plan
- . set up a resource centre for use by the public on the plan and its objectives
- . develop educational programs on historic building preservation and enhancement
- . design a timetable of activity to accomplish the plan's objectives and arrive at a priority of activity
- . investigate funding opportunities from all levels of government to achieve the objectives of the plan

L.A.C.A.C. will have an important role to play in its participation on the James Street North Planning Committee and will work in conjunction with this committee on architectural and historic matters and public awareness of the heritage aspects of James Street North. The L.A.C.A.C. will initiate architectural and historic resources, architectural design guidelines, walking/coach and buggy tours, brochures, funding information, and similar programs.

#### **. James Street North Consultant**

Consultants shall be hired by the City of Hamilton on advice of the James Street North Planning Committee. The consultants shall report to and work with the Committee to achieve the objectives and policies of the plan. The "Main Street Program" shall be examined to achieve this end.

The consultants shall be qualified and experienced in heritage district planning, architecture administration and public relations.



The consultants' responsibilities will be to

- . promote the plan
- . advise and assist the Plan Committee
- . report on all district matters to the Plan Committee
- . co-ordinate public and private activity in accordance with the plan's objectives and policies
- . liaise with municipal and provincial authorities on matters pertaining to the district
- . advise, encourage and assist in building conservation and enhancement of the district
- . set up a resource centre for use by the public on the plan and its objectives
- . develop educational programs on historic building conservation and enhancement
- . seek out all avenues of funding for the plan's objectives.

#### **. The Private Sector**

A most important and visible part of James Street North is its historic building stock. It, more than anything, provides the streetscape with a distinctive and rich character. Indeed the presence of this superb building resource is the reason for this plan. The greater proportion of building in the district is in private ownership. Implementation of the plan, in large part, is conservation and enhancement of the building stock. The private sector will be encouraged to

- . initiate building conservation and enhancement in concert with the objectives and policies of the plan
- . support and encourage activities to promote James Street North as a distinct and special heritage district
- . establish a Business Improvement Area and a list of priorities for action jointly with the James Street North Planning Committee.



#### 8.4 ACTION

- . Establish a James Street North Planning Committee as soon as possible and draw up terms of reference based on the plan. This committee will be able to establish priorities for steering the plan to fruition. A start has been made through the meetings to discuss Business Improvement Area formation and the City's application for the Main Street program. Priorities will depend on the importance to the plan and ease of implementation. Most of the major measures, heritage district designation, streetscaping improvements, traffic and parking refinements and land purchases will be started now.



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